



**ORPHEUS
VALLEY FIESTA FC**



**CORDOBA
CUSTOM ARTIST INDIAN**

BY DAVID HINNERS

Classical guitar players, especially students, often face the daunting task of trying to find an instrument that fits their needs and budget. Professional players know that there are a number of luthiers throughout the U.S. and abroad making fantastic instruments. Reputable luthiers such as Richard Brune and Paul Jacobson will charge a *significant* price for making a customized, high-quality guitar; additionally, the buyer will likely have to wait several years for the finished instrument.

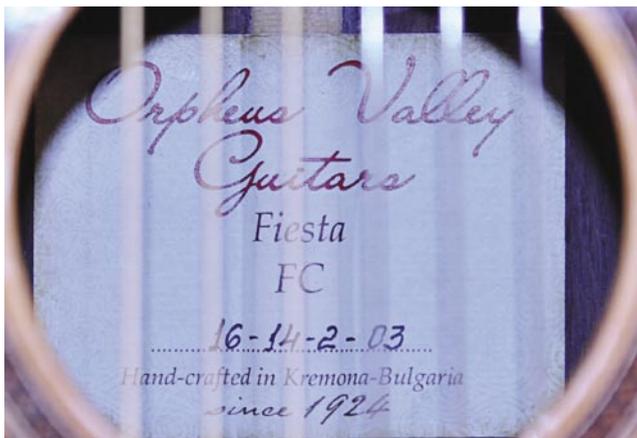
Professional players may have the resources and time to acquire one of these fine instruments, but unfortunately the average player does not.

Therefore, most people are forced to find their instruments through more conventional avenues, such as a guitar shop. Unfortunately chain stores have a limited selection of classical guitars, and even when you find one, it is hard to be sure of what you are buying. This month we had the opportunity to look at two guitars, at two different price points, both of which

will fit the needs of the average classical guitarist.

Orpheus Valley Fiesta FC

I was first able to get my hands on the Fiesta FC model from Orpheus Valley Guitars. The Fiesta FC is constructed with a solid Red cedar top, solid Indian rosewood back and sides, Honduras cedar neck, Indian rosewood fingerboard and bridge, bone nut and saddle, and Gebr. van Gent machine heads. Judging by the grain, the cedar top appears to be a younger wood,



but still good quality. The Indian rosewood back and sides appear outstanding and are well bonded. The Gebr. van Gent machine heads are decent, but slightly below the quality offered by models from Rodgers or Gotoh. Overall, it is well constructed with a standard fan bracing and dovetail neck joint.

How does it sound? The guitar has a very nice sound that is rich, warm and vibrant. The bass tones are loud and have a nice punch that is indicative of a cedar guitar. The treble tones are clear and definitive but not piercing or sharp. The third string, in particular, has a wonderful singing quality that is excellent for vibrato. The varying timbres are probably the most impressive feature of the Fiesta's sound. Dolce (towards the fingerboard), normal (over the soundhole) and ponticello (towards the bridge) areas provide great contrasts from soft and warm to bright and punchy. I was very impressed with the guitar's volume – the high-grade nitrocellulose finish allows for the sizeable volume while protecting its appearance. Overall, the Fiesta's sound quality is outstanding for a guitar in this price range – improvements could be made by using ebony for the fingerboard, for example, but that would understandably drive up the cost.

Playing the guitar is a treat for the left hand because the fingerboard is set to a moderate scale of 650mm. With a nut width of 52mm, the string distance, between one another, is a perfect fit for the right hand fingers. I decided that the ultimate test of the right hand on this guitar would be Tarrega's "Recuerdos de

la Alhambra." Tremolo is trouble-free for the index, middle and ring fingers while the thumb does not have to overstretch for moving bass lines. Needless to say, my fingers could flutter freely, and I was deeply impressed with the Fiesta's easy playing and wonderfully full, warm sound.

In testing the left hand, I decided that Bach's "Prelude" from *Lute Suite No. 4* would be most suitable. Scale passages and long stretches were accomplished with ease, and the guitar fit wonderfully in both the upper and lower positions of the fingerboard. Lastly, the shape of the guitar's body seemed to hug the left leg just right to create the perfect balance.

All things considered, the Fiesta FC is an excellent value for its price. The guitar lists at an amazing \$895 retail and delivers a number of quality features. The construction of this instrument is outstanding, and the high quality materials used contribute to a sound quality well above what you'd expect to hear in this price range. It is difficult to find a similar instrument that delivers such a warm and vibrant sound, so don't pass this up.

RATING 4.0 MSRP \$895

Buy if... you are an intermediate student and aspiring professional

Skip if... you are getting ready to play at Carnegie

Orpheus Valley Guitars
kremonausa.com

Cordoba Custom Artist Indian

While browsing classical guitars in stores I have run across a number of Cordoba guitars. The instruments range in price and style, but have a consistent quality that is reputable and trustworthy. I was recently given the opportunity to test one of their higher-end models, the Cordoba Custom Artist Indian.

The guitar consists of a beautiful selection of woods, including a Canadian cedar top, Indian rosewood back and sides and Madagascar rosewood headstock and bridge. In addition, they spared no expense with gold-plated Fustero tuning machines. Typically, two pieces of the tuning gears join to hold the string in tune. The Fustero gears meet with three pieces, and as a result, the player spends more time playing the guitar rather than tuning it. Looking deeper at the guitar's construction I noticed the intricate and deliberate placing of each bracing inside the guitar. The bonding and placement of all the parts appear nearly flawless.

The final touch, arguably the most important, was their choice of a thick, heavy finish. It looks nice and protects like a lead shield, but it has significant consequences on the guitar's sound and volume. The Cordoba's sound is noticeably dampened by this decision in the choice of finish, although I understand why they chose it. French polish and other high-end finishes have a tendency to wear off and leave a cloudy film. Regardless, I believe there could have been a moderate choice that does not compromise the

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CORDOBA



sound as significantly. According to the company, a French polish option is available through custom order.

With both of those points said, the Custom Artist Indian has a good sound that will work well in a variety of genres. The style and design of this guitar screamed "Latin" to me, so I decided to give it the Brazilian test with Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Choros No. 1." Each fermata that I played had a wonderful sustain. The vibrato wavered with intensity and individual notes sounded fantastic on all strings. I was a little disappointed when I strummed the opening chord and did not feel the punch that I expected, but nonetheless, this guitar produces a rich, unique tone that deserves praise.

My ultimate approval came after playing a Spanish piano tune called "Sevilla" by Isaac Albéniz. The guitar has a wonderful balance that ranges in sound and timbre. I felt that I could equally compete with a pianist in their range of color and sensitivity. Overall, the guitar has a great sound

with the potential to be extraordinary. A thinner finish would undoubtedly increase the volume and tonal range of this instrument to make it an outstanding guitar.

Playing the Custom Artist Indian is a real delight. It boasts an overall scale of 650mm and a 52mm width at the nut. The shape of the body is made to balance its size, and it will fit comfortably for most players. While playing this guitar I noticed that difficult scale passages in "Sevilla" were quite easy and molded to the left hand beautifully. The right hand could move freely between the strings and struck them effectively. Slurs, hammer-ons and pull-offs were accomplished with ease on "Choros No. 1." I felt that the fingerboard design was probably one of the greatest strengths of this guitar. The width of the fingerboard is narrow enough to prevent unnecessary stretches in the lower positions and broadens very slightly near the twelfth fret to make playing the upper positions effortless. As a result, the playability of this guitar is nearly perfect.

Overall, Cordoba has developed an excellent guitar through the use of outstanding materials and detailed construction. While a couple of details keep this guitar from being professional-grade, on the whole you'll get a lot of guitar for the price.

RATING **4.5**

MSRP \$2699

Buy if... you are an advanced student looking for a guitar that will last your entire studies at the university

Skip if... you are planning to play in a prestigious venue or audition for the L.A. Guitar Quartet

Cordoba Guitars
cordobaguitars.com



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